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Latins Urged to Drop Nuclear Test Plans

The United States sought yesterday to persuade Latin American nations to forego any possible plans to develop nuclear explosives for peaceful uses.

The State Department made the plea in a statement on negotiations currently underway in Mexico City to ban nuclear weapons in the Western Hemisphere south of the United States.

Twenty-one nations are taking part in the talks and several others, including the United States, are represented by observers. Cuba has boycotted the sessions and has made it clear that it will have nothing to do with the treaty.

What concerns the U.S. Government is the inclusion in the treaty in its present form of an article that would allow the use of nuclear devices for mutually acceptable peaceful purposes. In its statement yesterday, the State Department said:

"As we have pointed out in relation to the negotiations on a non-proliferation treaty, such a treaty would not be completely effective if it permitted the development of nuclear explosive devices for peaceful uses since such devices are, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from weapons.

The same restrictions would,

of course, apply to any agreement establishing a nuclear free zone . . .

"We are making earnest suggestions to the countries concerned at the conference in the hope that modifications in the treaty text can be made to take care of this problem."

The statement emphasized, however, that the United States has "always supported the establishment of nuclear free zones in those areas which have remained free of nuclear weapons."

Although the statement made no mention of them, other problems for the United States that might arise out of the treaty are the right to transport nuclear weapons through the Panama Canal or fly them over the area covered by the pact.

There is also the problem of the United States naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The United States has made it clear that if Cuba subscribes to the pact, the United States will respect its provisions as they apply to the island, which presumably means banning nuclear weapons at Guantanamo Bay.